



# FCT

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia  
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA

## **Recommendation on how to apply the evaluation guidelines for the assessment of complains form Research Units – FCT assessment of Research Units 2014**

In order to further assist you in the analysis of the complaints submitted and in light of questions and doubts that have been raised, please find below some additional information and more detailed suggestions on how to apply the complaints' analysis guidelines.

Please keep in mind that the outcome of the complaint will be one of the following:

- The unit maintains its scores and grades. An explanatory comment from the second panel of independent experts is conveyed to the unit;
- The unit passes to stage 2 of the evaluation and thus will be site-visited. An explanatory comment from the second panel of independent experts is conveyed to the unit and a final grade will be agreed upon by the initial panel;
- The unit is upgraded to a higher score that does not imply a site visit, because the unit remains bellow the threshold for stage 2 or because the unit was already visited on stage 2. This will require a reclassification by the second panel, which should take into account the classifications that were attributed by the first panel to all the other units within the same scientific area; an explanatory comment from the second panel is conveyed to the unit.

The result of the complaints procedure **will not have any impact on the other R&D units** and their assessments.

**FCT does not favour any specific outcome of the assessment of the complaints and any outcome is possible** and will be accepted if duly justified by the panel.

In compliance with Portuguese law and FCT regulations, as well as with best international practices in evaluation, it is of the utmost importance to ensure consistency and coherence across panels and reports. Thus, all panel members are advised to address the complaints submitted by the R&D Units as follows:

1. Begin by reading and carefully assessing the complaint and determine whether there are factual errors or major scientific shortcomings in the evaluation of the application.



# FCT

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia  
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA

Before reaching a decision, please keep in mind that:

- i. New information, not presented before by the R&D Unit, should not be considered in your analysis.
  - ii. A factual error is based on the confirmation of significant discrepancies between the panel report and the information provided by the unit in the application.
  - iii. A major shortcoming of scientific nature is a factual error that requires scientific expertise to be identified.
  - iv. A difference of opinion on a scientific issue is not considered to be a factual error; thus, complaints are not an opportunity to dispute valid scientific advice.
2. If you did identify a factual error or major shortcoming, you will need to assess the impact (if any) that the error or shortcoming has on the scores and/or classification of the R&D Unit. Assessment of the impact of a factual error or major shortcoming in the evaluation is likely to involve:
- i. Assessing the whole application.
  - ii. Reading the remote reviewers' reports and the rebuttal provided by the R&D Unit. On assessing the remote reviewers' reports, please keep in mind that, typically, remote reviewers assessed one or a limited number of applications and that comments and views from remote reviewers were taken into account by the panel's collegial report.
  - iii. Carefully considering the panel report and comments to the report (if any) submitted by the R&D Unit during the preliminary hearing, as well as the panel's response to those comments.
  - iv. Reading applications submitted by other R&D Units in the same scientific area. The classifications awarded by the panel to other R&D Units in the same scientific area are likely to provide appropriate points of calibration, should you need to propose a new score or classification for the R&D Unit.
- 2.1. If you did identify a factual error/major shortcoming that does not impact on the overall classification of the R&D Unit:
- i. An appropriate explanation needs to be provided to the R&D Unit (as detailed as necessary) indicating the nature of the error and the reasons why it did not impact on the R&D Unit's scores and classification.
- 2.2. If you did identify a factual error/major shortcoming that impacts on the classification of the R&D Unit:



# FCT

Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia  
MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO E CIÊNCIA

- i. Assess the impact that a correction of such an error or shortcoming has on the scores or classification of the R&D Unit;
  - ii. Ensure that the report clearly explains the panel's decision, substantiating the reasons underlying it.
  
3. If you did not identify any factual error or major shortcoming in the R&D Unit's evaluation:
  - i. You will need to provide a reasonable and sufficient explanation for the complaint not being upheld. Please avoid dismissive sentences or vague comments and provide the main reasons that justify your decision.
  - ii. Please keep in mind that there is no need either for a new reassessment of the R&D Unit nor for a detailed analysis of the remote reviewers' reports.

Please keep in mind at all stages, that all decisions are collegial and should be reached by consensus at panel meetings to be held in Lisbon, on 28 – 30 of October. No decisions are made nor can any decision be inferred before the panel meetings.

FCT, September 2015